Coastal Hospice’s Nikola Custis provides the support she wishes she’d had

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When Nikola Custis, LPN, thinks back to when she was caring for her sick mother, she remembers how alone she felt. Now, she is providing the support to others that she never had. Custis works for Coastal Hospice as an Access Coordinator (think “admissions counselor”) and serves as a liaison with Peninsula Regional Medical Center.

In these roles, she speaks with families of loved ones and helps them obtain the services and comfort that they need as their loved one approaches the end of their life.

“I can sympathize with these people because I’ve been there,” Custis said. “It’s rewarding to know we can offer assurance and peace to families and let them know that they are not alone.”

Most often, the person being cared for is a parent, and adult children can easily become overwhelmed with the responsibilities of being a caretaker. Coastal Hospice can help through service, education and demonstration.

“Whether it’s sending a nursing aide to educate the family about bathing, changing, or feeding, or having a nurse visit to demonstrate how to manage wound care and other ailments, we have the support they need,” said Custis.

Custis, a wife and mother, relies on her faith to cope with the challenges that come with her job. Prayer and worship help keep her spirits up. She spends her free time with her family and involved with her ministry, organizing programs such as a mid-year school supplies replenishment drive for elementary and middle school students.

She noted that in the African American community, asking for hospice help can sometimes be a taboo. That is why she encourages people to reach out for support, reminding them that they can stop services at any time, and can always come back if they wish.

“Coastal Hospice will not come in and take over,” she said. “Our goal is to help the patient live as well as possible during this time, and support families as they need it.”

In the Access department, Custis educates patients and families that hospice does not have to take place only in the hours or days before passing. People can be accepted with a diagnosis of six months or less – and if they live longer, that is wonderful.

“Even after loss, we are still here for emotional support,” says Custis. “I have gone through this with so many close loved ones of my own, and I have learned that it’s a part of life. Help and support are always available—you are never alone.”

For more information on Coastal Hospice, call 410-742-8732 or visit CoastalHospice.org.